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April 30, 2001      LB 305, 543, 708

SENATOR RAIKES: Aye-aye, sir.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: (Laugh) Senator Raikes, would you mind giving, perhaps, the highlights, or the main points of LB 305, and you and your Education's Committee viewpoint on what you see and what the money is necessary to go for teachers, what your focused view is? So perhaps, if we're going to focus on this money in this bill, maybe we ought to move the discussion to LB 305, to some degree, a little more than we're already doing.

SENATOR RAIKES: Well, let me try to respond this way, Senator, and if I get off track, why, you can redirect me. The focus in LB 305 or, more generally, the focus in the Education Committee, was to try to direct all our efforts and attention to the teacher salary issue. Now, Senator Thompson mentioned that there's other bills in the committee, and one I referred to, LB 708, which is still in committee. Again, there are several different ideas that are sort of peripheral to the teacher salary issue. But we in the committee, in an effort to be focused and to be fiscally as conservative as we could, decided that we needed to focus specifically on the salary issue. So LB 305 does that. We have...and I would also tell you that it also focuses specifically on public school teachers. We have made an effort to direct whatever funding we will direct...and again, the total for LB 305 is about \$50 million per year, or about \$100 per biennium. This is a relatively small amount of money compared to that. But again, I offered up the condition that if this is the only money that is available this year for teachers...and I certainly hope that wouldn't be the case. But if it is, it seems to me that it violates a principle that the Education Committee has tried to operate on, is to direct whatever funds are available to the most urgent need, which is teacher salaries.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Do you have others in there, tuition forgiveness, or other things like that? Or is there...

SENATOR RAIKES: There...

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: ...or is it mostly salary enhancement?